



YUM! Restaurants

Powering Up: going above and beyond employee engagement



Customer

Yum! Restaurants International (Canada) Company

Industry

Hospitality

Business Challenge

- Wanted to see long-term improvements in areas including overall communication, professional development, and transparency of people-planning processes—all driven by an employee team instead of HR.

Business Solution

- The Power of Conversation: Mindset Training
- Innovation-in-a-Box: i5 Process

Business Outcomes

- Significant year-over-year improvement in employee satisfaction and overall trust numbers rose by 7%
- Yum! scores went up on nearly 90% of the statements of the Great Places to Work survey
- More fluid communications and sharing of feedback between HR, Power Up Squad members, and employees
- PowerUp Squad learned how to best engage with employees
- Training served to drive innovation among the Squad members
- Members became more effective as a team - taking on leadership roles in anything transformation-related

Case Study

How creating an action planning team led to year-over-year improvements

The Opportunity

Fortune 500 business Yum! Brands, Inc. is the world's leading restaurant company with leading household name brands including KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell. Based in Louisville, Kentucky, Yum! operates over 40,000 restaurants across more than 125 countries and territories.

With 1.5 million associates worldwide, Yum! puts a strong emphasis on its people: ensuring employees know they can make a difference, and frequently infusing corporate culture with energy, opportunity and fun.

The organization's commitment to employees has not gone unrecognized: in 2013, Yum! Restaurants International (Canada) was ranked as one of the nation's best places to work by Great Places To Work® Institute Canada, after survey results affirmed most Yum! employees were more than satisfied with their workplace environment.



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The results were extremely positive—yet the company’s Canadian leadership wanted to do better.

“With an 85% average employee engagement level, we knew we had a good culture at our Yum! Canada offices—but we didn’t want to let our guards down based on those results alone,” says Brian Henry, Senior Director of Yum! Restaurants International (Canada) Company.

In particular, Yum! leaders wished to see long-term improvements in areas including overall communication, professional development, and transparency of people-planning processes.

“It simply wasn’t enough for us to work on all the ‘low-hanging fruit’ tactical things: we wanted to see year-over-year results,” says Brian. “If, year-over-year, we could say that we’d seen more than a 5% improvement in any category, we would know we were creating the right level of energy with employees—and responding to their needs.”

While Human Resources traditionally owned and was accountable for employee engagement, Yum!’s leadership believed some employees were holding back on their opinions pertaining to the corporate culture.

“Our Human Resources team is very close to employees, but generally speaking, HR is often seen as distanced and unaware of how employees really feel,” says Brian. “We began to realize that employees were the best people to say what was—and wasn’t—going right.”

As a result, in early 2013 Brian and his team began to explore how to minimize HR’s role in corporate action planning. In other words: “How could we flip things upside-down and have Yum! employees become more accountable for their own engagement?”

The Solution

PowerUp Squad

To best address issues identified in the Great Places to Work survey, Yum! created an action-planning team of six employees.

Named the PowerUp Squad, this advocate group was developed to be a truly cross-functional team representing each Yum! brand,



function and job level—and to remove any barriers existing between HR and the overall organization.

“Each team member is embedded within teams to the point where they truly understand the day-to-day life of employees,” says Marzena Dodolak, Senior Manager of Yum! Human Resources in Canada. “Because of their positions in the company, they could penetrate far deeper within the ‘employee trenches’ and build credibility more quickly among their peers than an HR-centric group.”

By early 2013, the PowerUp Squad was fully set up and ready to take action. But the question remained: how, and where, would they start?

Squad training: Juice Inc.

It was at this time that Yum! turned to Juice Inc. for guidance.

Juice’s training helped the PowerUp Squad develop the right mind-set—particularly, on how to most effectively tackle such a large project as earning employee trust through the Power of Conversation. Participants learned the skills required to effectively draw out people’s ideas and best thinking, manage any tensions that exist, and harmonize competing ideas and priorities.

“Essentially, Juice’s training was a springboard that helped our PowerUp Squad learn how to best engage with employees,” says Marzena. “Squad members learned how to create and manage focus groups, framing questions to get employees to tell them what they really thought about particular workplace issues.”

Training also served to drive innovation among the PowerUp Squad members. As part of Juice’s Innovation In A Box program, participants learned the i5: a strategic five-stage process and toolkit that fuels innovative thinking among individuals and teams.

“At the end of training, we saw two major benefits,” says Brian. “First, it allowed our squad to be more effective as a team. Second, we saw Juice’s training as an incredibly helpful development tool to help our PowerUp Squad members take on leadership roles in anything transformation-related.”





Yum!’s efforts to improve year-over-year results has paid off: in 2014, the company saw employee trust rise by 7% on average. Moreover, Yum! scores went up on nearly 90% of the statements of the Great Places to Work survey.



The Results

In early 2013, employees were introduced to the Yum! PowerUp Squad: an action planning team and “conduit for ideas and solutions,” that all levels of the company could have input into.

By applying many of the skills learned through Juice training, the PowerUp Squad was able to easily brand itself, introduce itself to employees as the group responsible for action planning, and communicate its plans.

The squad focused on key areas for improvement identified not only in the Great Places to Work survey, but through general employee feedback. Some key successes included:

- **Communicating the company’s vision and purpose.** In 2013, Yum! decided to create three separate and unique brands in Canada. The PowerUp Squad was involved in identifying employee concerns and ensuring they received clarification regarding any long-term corporate plans. Throughout the transition, the squad also ensured that the Leadership Team communicated frequently, so that employees understood their role within the organization.
- **Building a new workplace environment.** Yum! moved into a new building in early 2013—something that the PowerUp Squad played a key role in. “We didn’t want a literal building—we wanted a place that would reflect us as a brand,” says Brian. “Based on employee feedback, the squad helped influence the design—providing ideas for room names, suggesting more vibrant colour schemes and better technology. Today, we have a space that is more inspirational for collaboration and more transparent; and our employees have responded very well to the space.”
- **Development:** “We already had a fairly good professional development program, but some employees remarked it felt more like compliance training,” says Marzena. “Our PowerUp Squad recognized that we needed a thorough needs assessment and worked with HR to develop a full training curriculum to better address development and training needs across the organization.”
- **Transparency:** The PowerUp Squad conducted employee focus groups, confirming very little was known about Yum!’s People



Planning Process. “As a result, we addressed this with everyone at a quarterly meeting and explained the process,” says Brian.

- **Benefits:** Employees were consulted for ideas on how to enhance Yum!’s overall offerings to employees from a benefits perspective. Based on feedback, the PowerUp Squad helped spearhead the changing of providers, added more desirable items to the benefits program, and created a brochure highlighting key benefits some employees may not have been aware of.

One year later, employees continue to eagerly approach the Yum! PowerUp Squad.

“Ideas are coming from everywhere now!,” says Brian. “Of course, we are still receiving feedback directly through Human Resources, but creating the PowerUp Squad has resulted in a great increase of employee opinions and engagement.”

“Meanwhile, HR is being influenced by the learnings of the PowerUp Squad,” adds Marzena. “What we now have is an extremely fluid relationship between Human Resources and the squad.”

As well, Yum!’s efforts to improve year-over-year results has paid off: in 2014, the company saw employee trust rise by 7% on average. Moreover, Yum! scores went up on nearly 90% of the statements of the Great Places to Work survey.

Yum! continues to strive to do more for its employees—and expects to beat its latest results in the next annual rankings.

“We’ve engaged Juice in workshops, conducted interviews with employees focusing on new themes identified in 2014 results, and are in the process of creating an action plan to once again engage our employees’ hearts and minds,” says Marzena.

“At the end of the day, we want our people to feel proud to work at Yum!—and with ongoing guidance from Juice and an open approach to employee communication, we’re definitely on the right track.”





About Juice

Juice Inc. clients think of Juice as their performance partner. Juice believes energized and engaged employees fuel great customer experiences and better business results. That's why Juice focuses on ideas, skills and tools that people can put to use immediately. The organizations Juice partners with get committed people who own the results!

Juice also builds upon and leverages the work that organizations have already done so they get more from their investment, creating energized teams, better performance and results that matter.

For more information about how Juice can help your organization, email info@juiceinc.com.

JUICE INC.

Orchard Park
5420 Hwy 6 N., Suite 390
Guelph, ON Canada N1H 6J2

Office Phone: 519-822-5479

Toll Free Phone: 1-888-822-5479

Email: info@juiceinc.com

Web Site: <http://www.juiceinc.com>

